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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE.

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The general agreement of commentators that the Gospel of Luke is the Gospel of universal humanity, of man irrespective of national distinctions, is a very strong, almost conclusive, argument in favor of the correctness of that opinion. I recognize the weight of such a consensus and the deference which it may rightly claim.

And yet, until we come to the last command of Christ, 24: 47 I confess myself unable to discover in the Gospel any basis for this theory. The narrative seems to be surcharged with quite another thought, and to move within the limits of a clearly defined restriction. The expressions of universality common to all the other Evangelists are singularly wanting here. In Matthew, we read, "Ye are the light of the world, the salt of the earth"; "The field is the world"; "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden"; in Mark, "The Sabbath was made for man"; "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations"; in John, "The lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world"; "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me"; "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold"; "That Jesus should die for that nation and not for that nation only but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." Luke is devoid of all such ideas and expressions. It is the only Gospel in which our Lord does not go outside of the Holy Land, and in which no one from beyond its borders comes to Him for help and grace. It is the only Gospel which records no intercourse of Christ with a Gentile. No daughter of an accursed race, as in Matthew and Mark, pleads with him for succor; no Greeks as in John, say, "We would see Jesus." The request for the cure of the Centurion's servant is brought by the elders of the Jews, and the reason urged is the love the Roman sol-

dier has shown for the people of God. So in Christ's discourse at Nazareth, the widow of Sarepta is saved from famine because of her kindness to the Hebrew prophet; and the Syrian leper is healed by obeying the injunctions of another prophet of Israel. The section of Matthew and Mark (Matt. 15-16: 18; Mark 7-8: 27) in which are recorded the abolition of the distinction between the clean and the unclean, the feeding of the four thousand (a Gentile miracle), the cure of the Syrophenician's daughter, is omitted entirely by Luke; in its stead is given our Lord's tour through portions of the Holy Land unnoticed by the other Evangelists.

The completely Hebraistic character of the first two chapters of the Gospel is acknowledged by all. Language and thought are unmistakable. Persons, characters, and blessings, all center around the covenant, the fathers, Abraham, David, and Israel. Zacharias sings: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people; and hath raised up a mighty salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began; to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham." The angel announces the birth of Christ as glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all "the people;"—in the New Testament always meaning Israel, either natural or spiritual. In this Gospel alone Christ receives the seal of the Abrahamic covenant; here only are the Levitical rites of purification for mother and child performed; and only here is Jesus brought into the temple to be presented to the Lord. Simeon recognizes the infant Saviour as the consolation of Israel, and in like manner those to whom Anna speaks of Him are looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

The preparatory ministry of John the Baptist is introduced by a statement of the political and religious condition not, as is often said, of the world, but of the Holy Land. The countries named at the beginning of the third chapter—Judea, Galilee, Iturea and Trachonitis, and Abilene,—all belong to the theocracy, and their inhabitants had received the rite of circumcision. The political dismemberment of the nation and its religious disorganization call for a Saviour. Accordingly a prophecy is immediately cited which declares that the

salvation of Israel by God shall be seen by all flesh. That this is the meaning of the prophecy and not that all flesh shall be saved will be seen by examining Isaiah 40:5; 52:9, 10. It is this of which Simeon sings: "The salvation which thou hast prepared before the face of all the nations, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel." The sermon on the plain is delivered to His disciples, and a great number of "the people" i. e. Israelites, from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coasts of Tyre and Sidon. In Luke, Judea is constantly met in very unexpected places; this is true in the *Textus Receptus*; if the reading of Westcott and Hort is adopted, the cases are still more numerous and surprising. Jerusalem, the religious and civil metropolis of the nation, occupies a unique place. In that city the narrative begins and ends; to it Christ is brought as an infant and offered to the Lord; here He is found at the age of twelve years; throughout the Gospel it is spoken of as the point to which Christ is aiming: so that Maurice, although he considers Luke the Gentile Gospel, says: "At the same time we have found St. Luke, not once or twice, not by accident, but continuously, through his whole Gospel, and specially through that long and memorable series of discourses which follows the account of the Transfiguration, connecting all intimations respecting the future with Jerusalem;" only in this Gospel are we told of our Lord's passionate sobs when he caught sight of the devoted city on his royal entry; his eschatological discourse "contemplates exclusively the destruction of Jerusalem" (Godet); in that city, as we have said, the Gospel ends.

As we study the Gospel we find that the piety, the characters and the blessings are all of the Old Testament type. Mary sings, "He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He hath sent empty away; our Lord says here, not as in Matthew, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," but "Blessed are ye poor; Blessed are ye that hunger now; Woe to you that are full, that laugh now," etc. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus, as well as other portions of the Gospel, cannot be understood without remembering its Old Testament character.

For Luke is the Hebrew Gospel. As the Gospel of Matthew

is the Jewish Gospel, in which Christ comes as the King of the Jews, this Gospel of Luke is the Hebrew Gospel ; the relation which Christ sustains is an earlier relation than that of King. One cannot read Luke without being struck with the fact that the bestowal of favor here is frequently justified by the existence of some previous tie or relationship. "Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, to be loosed from her bond on the Sabbath day?" "This day is salvation come to this house forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham." Specially is this true of those cases which are considered peculiarly characteristic of the spirit of the Gospel. In the parable in the 15th chapter, "the crown and pearl of the parables", the sheep belonged to the flock from which it had strayed ; the coin was the precious heirloom of the owner ; the prodigal was a son returning to his father's house. It is most worthy of notice also, as illustrating the same principle, that only in this Gospel is grace ever consequent upon the character or conduct of the recipient. The woman in Simon's house and the thief on the cross are examples.

Luke then is the Gospel of Redemption. Here first in the New Testament we meet the word ; the keynote of the Gospel is, "He hath visited and wrought redemption for His people." Those who welcome Him are looking for the redemption of Jerusalem ; in the trying times that are to come on the earth His followers are directed to lift up their heads, for their redemption draweth nigh ; and after His death the wail of His sorrow-stricken disciples is, "We trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel." It is the Gospel of God's people ; of His primal relation to them, and of their primal relation to Him.

These primal relations are formally stated at the beginning of God's revelation of Himself to His people. He is their redeemer, Ex. 6 : 6 ; they are His own covenant people, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, Ex. 19 : 4-7. His first message by Moses to the children of Israel is, "I am Jehovah, . . . and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments." "Jehovah thy redeemer" becomes the favorite and frequent designation of God ; Isa. 14 : 14 ; 54 : 5 ; 43 : 14 ; 44 : 6 ; 48 : 17 ; 49 : 7 ; 54 : 8. In these passages and many others the Hebrew word is that

which, when a noun, we transliterate "Goel," the Kinsman redeemer, the person who by right of consanguinity was bound to rescue his enslaved kinsman, to redeem his inheritance, and to avenge his blood.

"The people whom Thou hast redeemed" becomes a favorite description of Israel and their consequent relation, as described in Ex. 6 : 4 ; 19 : 5, is made the continual basis of appeal and ground of argument : "I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage ; if ye will keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar people, a treasure unto Me above all people, and ye shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

If our theory is correct, we shall find that Luke presents Christ as a Kinsman Redeemer ; that His work includes the whole land and the whole covenant people ; and that the redeemed are a holy and priestly nation. The limits of this paper will allow only a reference to each of these.

1. Christ is the Kinsman Redeemer. That Luke presents Him specially as the Redeemer, has been already shown. His kinship to those whom He redeems, His perfect humanity, in infancy, childhood, manhood—in His possession of every human sympathy and feeling—all this has been so often dilated upon that it need not be argued here. By the announcement to Mary before His birth, by His genealogy placed at the beginning of His official work, by continual manifestations, He is shown to be the Son of God.*

The work of the Redeemer necessitates the existence of an adversary from whom the captive is to be rescued. The opening song proclaims deliverance of the people out of the hand of their enemies ; the adversary, Satan, occupies a position peculiar to this Gospel ; the world is in his power and at his disposal ; after the first official temptation he departs from Christ until the appointed season ; as an accompaniment of

* At each successive stage in the long preparation for His work, from first to last, we mark the gradual and harmonious revelation of His double nature. His Godhead and Manhood—signs of triumph and suffering—are united at the Nativity, the Presentation, the Examination in the Temple, the Baptism, the Temptation ; for all is order and truth in the Godlike life, quickening and quickened in due measure. Westcott's Introduction ; p. 373.

the victory of the disciples over demons, Christ beholds Satan cast down from Heaven ; the afflicted woman is one whom Satan has bound ; Satan takes possession of the betrayer of Christ and obtains the disciples to sift them as wheat.

2. In this Gospel the whole land is visited by Christ, and his work is exclusively in Palestine. Every class of the covenant people is the object of Christ's favor. This is especially true of those of whom Mary sings, "He hath uplifted them of low degree." Woman at that time was in such estimation that at the beginning of Christ's ministry His disciples wonder that He should talk with a woman. In this Gospel the divine revelations are made, not to Joseph, but to Mary, and in quick succession we meet with names, Elizabeth, Anna, who share with her the tokens of divine favor. Throughout the Gospel women are mentioned with particular honor ; they minister to the Lord of their substance ; they sit at His feet and receive valued commendation ; they are specially mentioned as prominent among those who bewail His sad fate at His crucifixion. Woman in Luke is exalted to a position which she has ever since held. The Samaritan and the publican were looked on with contempt—excluded from all honorable social intercourse. The "good Samaritan" becomes the title of honor for all time, and the Samaritan leper exhibits the gratitude which his fellow-sufferers failed to show. The publican prays in such a way that he becomes the type of the justified, while the publican, Zaccheus, is the model of honor and justice. It is the woman who was a sinner, who loved much, and Christ's chosen companion in Paradise is a crucified robber. There is no class or condition that does not in this Gospel furnish its representatives among the shining ones.

3. The nation was to be a holy nation. Until we come to this Gospel there is no mention of the Spirit's work on any individual ; but this is emphatically the Gospel of the Holy Spirit. The forerunner is filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. Zacharias is filled with the Holy Spirit ; of Simeon it is said the Holy Spirit was upon him. Jesus returns from the wilderness full of the Holy Spirit. He returns in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. The Gospel is full of the fruits of the Spirit—holiness of character and conduct.

The venerable pair to whom we are introduced at the beginning of the narrative, walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, blameless, are the first of a long line of saints whose names adorn this Gospel of grace. It is worthy of notice that for the first time in the New Testament we meet in this Gospel with the word, grace—favor, and in the opening lines we find ourselves in an atmosphere different from anything in the preceding Gospels. From Mary, who has found favor with God, to the close of the Gospel, where it is said of Joseph of Arimathea that he had not consented to the counsel and deed of them, grace bestowed, grace received, grace recognised, meets us everywhere. Every provision is made for holy conduct. John the Baptist gives here what he does nowhere else, ethical instructions to his converts. As we read on, we find directions for every aspect of life, for every relation we sustain, social, moral, religious. Here in very deed the rich and the poor meet together and the duties of every station are enforced.

4. The nation must be a priestly nation. This Gospel, which begins in the priestly compartment of the temple with the priest performing the duties of his office, and closes with the disciples in the temple praising and blessing God, is so evidently the priestly Gospel that I need not argue the point. Prayer and praise are on every page. Its songs have been the canticles of the church ; its prayers the model prayers of all ages. In all the great crises in our Saviour's life in this Gospel He is praying ; here the disciples make the request, Lord teach us to pray ; here are the exhortations to persevering prayer, and here the assurances and instances of successful petition.

If any one has done me the honor to read this paper, he will be so kind as to remember that I am attempting to notice only one feature of this Gospel. A study of Luke in the light of the Hebrew calendar, ritual, tabernacle, and offerings, will develop other characteristics, and will throw light on questions which seem to baffle the commentators. If, for example, they have discovered in Luke's narrative an "*order*", temporal or logical, which justifies the place he gives it as a reason for writing the Gospel, I should be glad to see it.